

Testimony for HB 6616: “An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Mirka Dominguez-Salinas, and I am a resident of New Haven. I am formerly undocumented and currently serve as the Services for Undocumented Neighbors (SUN) Program Manager at Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services(IRIS) in New Haven.

I stand in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. Through the SUN program I have seen how much of an impact HUSKY enrollment can make for children and pregnant individuals. But many are still in need of healthcare and we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

The SUN program serves between 300-400 undocumented individuals a year in the New Haven area and we expect that number to continue to rise. We see individuals who have arrived in the last 2 years but also field questions about resources for undocumented folks who have been here for longer. Healthcare is one of the most requested resources. New arrivals come to work and escape violence but need appropriate medical care to be able to be healthy enough to thrive. More established undocumented folks avoid care because of the costs. A lot of clients work in physical jobs that wear down their bodies. Without proper care and access to care they are unable to provide for their families or just themselves.

We see many cases of individuals having thousands of dollars in medical debt because of an ER visit that could have been prevented with earlier access to care. Many times we see parents pushing for kids to get care while putting aside their own needs. They miss out on preventative care and then finally ask for medical care for themselves when their situation is dire. Chronic health issues, such as diabetes and heart disease, that could be easily managed or treated, develop into more serious conditions that require more medical interventions and become more expensive in the long run. In the long term, we need to ensure that all immigrants, including parents and adults, are able to have access to HUSKY and the healthcare they need. Savings to hospitals from reduced uncompensated care costs could amount to roughly \$63.3 million.

I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Mirka Dominguez-Salinas